

turn on Denton Road,
and drive down
to Geddes.
I'm thirsty
and I want to
taste the
beer.

SHELIA'S FRIENDS

In
grade school,
Shelia had
imaginary friends.
She would talk
to them on the playground.
This is Horace the Horse,
she'd say, and this
is Bob the Bear.
I'd stand there
looking at nothing.
Shelia was nice,
she didn't make fun of me
because I was a slow reader,
so I would hang out
with her on the playground.
This is Sam the Snake,
and over there's Dave the Dragon.
Hello, I'd say to the air.
One day
two fifth graders came over
to where Shelia and I were talking
to her imaginary friends,
and the two fifth graders began
calling Shelia names, saying
she was crazy.
Shelia began to cry,
and then she ran back in the school.
I was left out there
with the two fifth graders.
What are you going to do?
they asked me,
but before I could do anything,
before I could turn and get away,
the larger of the two hit me
in the face. I put up my hands,
covered my face,
and tried very hard
not to cry.
If they saw you cry,
they never left you alone,

you were an easy mark.
I didn't know how to fight
or protect myself. Later,
I would.
And while I thought
Shelia's imaginary friends
were silly, there was at least
one good thing about them:
they didn't make fun of you
for being a slow reader,
and they didn't
hit you
in the face
for no good
reason at
all.

DRIVE HOME

On
Michigan
Avenue, driving
home from
Moloch Insurance,
where I work,
I see an Arab merchant
chase a dreadlocked black man
down the street.
The Arab merchant
swings a baseball bat
at the black man's head.
This happens
on the west side of
Beech-Daly Road, in the city
of Inkster. Across the street
is the Summit Motel, a dive
with daily and weekly rates
where transients, hookers,
and crack-heads live.
Last month,
two gunmen — one fifteen,
the other seventeen — kicked
down a door at the Summit Motel
and killed three people.
The gunmen
had thought there
was a crack dealer
in the room, but it
turned out that they
had kicked down the wrong door.
They shot the occupants anyway.
Several